DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 457 289 UD 034 430

TITLE	Beyond Suspensions: Safe & Orderly Schools That Educate All Students.
INSTITUTION	Milwaukee Catalyst Inc., WI.
SPONS AGENCY	Helen Bader Foundation, Milwaukee, WI.; Joyce Foundation, Chicago, IL.
PUB DATE	2001-02-00
NOTE	43p.; Also supported by the Charles D. Jacobus Family Foundation.
AVAILABLE FROM	Milwaukee Catalyst, 2714 North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53212. Tel: 414-264-4010; Fax: 414-264-4710; e-mail: mkecatlst@aol.com.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Behavior Problems; Board of Education Policy; *Discipline; Educational Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; Leadership; Parent Participation; Public Schools; School Policy; *School Safety; *Student Behavior; Suspension
IDENTIFIERS	Milwaukee Public Schools WI

ABSTRACT

This report profiles two Milwaukee, Wisconsin, public schools that are providing students with safe and orderly classrooms while using suspension only as a last resort. It places the successful schools' experiences in the context of research that defines effective school discipline practices and explains how suspensions can harm students. Examining the Milwaukee district's over-reliance on student suspensions, the report also discusses policies being implemented in the Cleveland Municipal School District to reduce high student suspensions. Finally, it offers school and district level suggestions for bringing discipline policies and practices more in line with the central mission to educate all children. Suggestions include assessing school discipline practices to identify critical needs, developing a plan to improve school discipline and student achievement, reducing suspensions for less serious misbehavior, holding schools accountable for effective discipline, and inviting parent and community member support for school discipline efforts. Three appendixes present methods for exploring discipline practices in local schools, a parent's checklist for examining discipline in school, and data on Milwaukee public school suspensions, 1999-00. (Contains endnotes and resources.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 457 289

Beyond Suspensions

Safe & Orderly Schools That Educate All Students

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

UD034430

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

B Smith
Milwaukee Catalyst

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Milwaukee *Catalyst*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Beyond Suspensions

Safe & Orderly Schools *That Educate All Students*

effective
discipline
high achievement

COMMUNITY

PARENTAL

INVOLVEMENT

Milwaukee *Catalyst*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Milwaukee Catalyst wishes to thank the Milwaukee community and the following organizations for their work toward achieving Safe & Orderly Schools That Educate All Students:

Milwaukee Public Schools
Wisconsin FACETS
POWER
ACLU of Wisconsin
TABS
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee
Milwaukee Police
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee School of Education
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Special thanks to the administration, staff, students, and families of Maryland Avenue Elementary School and Madison University High School for opening their schools to us and giving generously of their time.

Photo credit: Michael Cummings, Hocus Focus Studio

Milwaukee Catalyst receives support from the Helen Bader Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, and the Charles D. Jacobus Family Foundation. Designs for Change, Chicago, IL, provides technical assistance.

© 2001 Milwaukee Catalyst Inc.

Introduction

When Milwaukee Catalyst asked parents, students, community leaders, and educators what concerned them most about the Milwaukee public schools, the district's very high number of suspensions was often cited.

Parents and community members support disciplining students who commit clear transgressions that disrupt learning or threaten school safety. Many take issue, however, with the great number of suspensions that do not seem warranted by minor infractions that could be avoided with an effective school discipline program.

Suspensions have serious consequences for young people that extend far beyond lost days of learning. Even a single suspension can place a child on a dangerous path, labeling him or her as a troublemaker in school. These perceptions are hard to change and work against a student trying to improve. There is also a large body of research to suggest that suspensions harm children academically, even pushing them out of school.

Parents insist that it is better to avoid suspensions in the first place. The frequent use of suspensions places blame on children, masking deficiencies in the academic program or classroom organization and management. Parents do not want their children sent home from school when teachers and administrators could be offering alternatives to keep them in the classroom where they belong.

In response to these concerns, Milwaukee Catalyst is leading a citywide campaign to promote *Safe & Orderly Schools That Educate All Students.* Collaborating on various phases of the campaign are the Milwaukee Public Schools, Wisconsin FACETS, POWER, ACLU of Wisconsin, TABS, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee, Milwaukee Police, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

School of Education, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and the Milwaukee community.

Safety and order are necessary in school. But the frequent use of suspensions not only fails to ensure safety and order, it denies students the chance to benefit from the school's instructional program. Any school discipline program must ensure safe schools while providing all students with full access to a quality education.

In this report, we profile two Milwaukee public schools that are providing students with safe and orderly classrooms while using suspension only as a last resort. We place their experiences in the context of a wealth of research that defines effective school discipline practices. Examining the Milwaukee district's reliance on student suspensions, we take a look at policies now being implemented in the Cleveland Municipal School District to reduce high student suspensions. Finally, we offer school and district level suggestions to bring discipline policies and practices more in line with the central mission of our city's public schools—educating all children.

We urge a district-wide effort to improve school discipline practices. By adopting what is best from public schools that are succeeding, Milwaukee schools can chart a course away from the disastrous policy of suspending almost one-fifth of its students each year. We invite all members of the Milwaukee community to join us in promoting a positive discipline program that advances our children's futures by keeping them in school.

Betty J. Smith
Coordinator
Milwaukee Catalyst

6

Table of Contents

I. Some Milwaukee Schools Are Succeeding.....2

II. Understanding Practices That Work.....11

III. Suspensions Are Too High In Milwaukee.....15

IV. Suspensions Harm Our Children.....17

V. Achieving District-Wide Reform.....19

VI. Recommendations for Improving Discipline in Milwaukee.....24

Endnotes & Resources.....28

APPENDIX A *Methods for Exploring Discipline Practices in Local Schools*.....31

APPENDIX B *A Parent's Discipline Checklist for examining discipline in your child's school*.....34

APPENDIX C *Suspensions in Milwaukee Public Schools, 1999-2000*.....35

Some Milwaukee Schools Are Succeeding

While student suspensions are high in most every Milwaukee public school, we begin this report by offering profiles of two Milwaukee public schools from which other schools and the district can learn much about policies and practices that contribute to effective school discipline. In these schools, student suspensions are low and academic achievement is climbing—showing us that suspensions are not required for an effective learning environment.

At Maryland Avenue Elementary and Madison University High School, leaders put into practice a firm commitment to keeping students in school. They employ positive strategies to create a school environment that attracts students and keeps them engaged in learning. Finding effective ways to handle discipline issues in school is hard work, but these schools are rising to the challenge.

Milwaukee Catalyst staff members, partners, and volunteers visited these schools, making observations around the building and schoolyard, and interviewing students, staff, and administrators about various issues relating to school discipline. Parents and family members were interviewed to include their views of the school and its connection to the community. *(See Appendix A)*

Maryland Avenue Elementary School

Maryland Avenue Elementary School serves approximately 300 students in Kindergarten through eighth grade. About 27% of students live in the immediate attendance area. The student population is 73% African American, 16% white, 6% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 1% Native American; 83% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. It is one of 88 SAGE schools in Milwaukee, with no more than 15 students per teacher in grades K-3. As an "Accelerated School," * Maryland Avenue works to uphold the following principles: (1) Unity of Purpose; (2) School Site Decisions and Responsibility; and (3) Building on Strengths, emphasizing enrichment rather than remediation.

Maryland Avenue students maintain a 92% attendance rate and reported the highest average Grade Point Average of all K-8 schools in the district. Fourth and eighth grade students at Maryland Avenue perform consistently better than the district as a whole on all five Wisconsin state assessment tests. In 1998-99, Maryland issued suspensions to only 24 of its 289 elementary and middle grade students.[1]

Keeping Students in School

Maryland's principal vows to "keep students here at all costs," a philosophy that shapes Maryland's discipline practices. Students are given many chances to

** Information about programs cited in the report can be found in the Endnotes & Resources section.*

1989-1999 School Performance
Attendance 92%
Average GPA ...2.87
Suspensions..... 8%
(24 of 288 students)

correct their behavior with assistance and support from the school community. One eighth grader says, "The principal isn't quick to suspend. She counsels us and takes time to find out what the problem is." Parents at Maryland agree that children belong in school. "Whatever the solution is," one parent declares, "it should focus on keeping students in school."

While Maryland practices zero-tolerance for fighting and profanity, school staff take a closer look if a conflict reoccurs. For incidents other than fighting, a "pending suspension" is issued with the purpose of getting the parents involved. Although Maryland does not have an in-school suspension program, the school does issue detentions for certain offenses like chronic tardiness and repeated classroom problems, allowing students to stay in school.

Welcoming the input of all school staff in improving discipline, the principal expects teachers to recommend appropriate discipline when they refer students to her office. A child cannot be suspended from the school bus without full agreement of the administration, parent, and teacher.

Adults Show Respect

An attitude of respect among school staff toward students, staff, and parents is crucial to developing respect in children. "Teachers here would never expect respect from a child if they didn't first treat that child with respect," says one parent. Parents also appreciate that sometimes-tough lessons are taught in "a tender, loving manner." As one parent explains, "Everyone speaks kindly to each other. Students are taught to behave in a way that respects others."

Staff attitudes of care and respect come through clearly to students, who often describe their teachers as "role models." Parents feel the school's commitment to really help children maintains this respectful environment. Committed to supporting each other, grade level teachers meet once a week to talk about school-wide concerns, grade level expectations, and curriculum.

Clear Expectations

When describing Maryland's approach to student discipline, the principal, teachers, and support staff emphasize efforts to ensure that "children know what is expected of them" at school. Teachers try to clearly communicate and reinforce expectations. In one classroom, for example, a poster on the wall reads:

Classroom Expectations:

(1) Follow directions the first time they are given.

(2) Raise your hand and wait to be called on if you need something.

(3) Keep your hands, feet, and other objects to yourself.

(4) Use respectful, courteous language and behavior at all times.

Parents appreciate Maryland's fair and calm approach to discipline. Adults do not raise their voices or battle with students. As noted by one parent, "Teachers talk to students and remind them of the standard of behavior that they agreed to uphold at the beginning of the year."

When talking to a student about discipline, the principal tailors each conversation to the individual child's needs. She admits, "When a student is angry or upset, I don't always know what's best. I've learned from students themselves how to talk to different children effectively." Incorporating student feedback, she deals with older students differently than younger ones: "If what I say isn't interpreted in a constructive way," she

observes, "then I haven't helped to improve the situation."

Teaching Good Character

Maryland Avenue focuses on social development as a proactive discipline strategy through a program called "Character Counts!" By focusing on one positive character trait each month—Citizenship, Respect, Caring, Responsibility—students are helped to apply the trait during each morning's announcements. Throughout the month, students are rewarded for exhibiting the positive trait. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for self-discipline, upholding the values and behaviors needed to create a harmonious environment.

The whole school community works as a unit to reinforce good character traits. Parents and teachers discuss the significance of each trait with students. Older students are responsible for giving rewards to younger students who display positive traits. Periodically, the school asks students to recall the previous character traits and rewards students who remember the most. Children illustrate the positive character traits with art work and their illustrations are displayed throughout the building.

Parents commend Maryland for its efforts to help their children build positive character and develop a sense of responsibility. As one parent explained, "As a parent, it's good to know that your child is learning something every day that will help them become a good person."

A Family-Like Environment

Maryland Avenue's principal, a teacher at Maryland for ten years, strives to provide a family-like environment for staff, students, and their parents. Parents describe their interactions with the school as warm, friendly, and respectful. They see the impact of this environment on their children who feel at home in the school and enjoy going there.

The principal emphasizes efforts to create a "warm and nurturing environment" in which teachers take responsibility for all aspects of students' growth. The K-8 setting brings staff and students together for several years, forming strong bonds. Two eighth graders, one who has attended for 8 years and one for 10 years, describe Maryland as "small and friendly," and both like the one-on-one attention they receive.

Maryland teachers encourage students to look to their peers for academic support. Emphasizing collaborative work over academic competition between students, teachers discourage a hierarchy among students that can lead to attitudes of superiority and conflicts. Students are taught to assess themselves according to their own capabilities and within the rules placed before them. During lessons, students are reminded to ask a fellow student for help before consulting the teacher.

Student mobility is a concern to Maryland staff members, who see a connection between low mobility, high achievement, and low suspensions. When a child moves, school staff work with families to help the child continue attending Maryland. "Teachers refer to children as 'my students' and want them to stay here," says the principal. "They are committed to children's learning and want to see it through." After graduating, former students take part in school events. One parent notes that teachers at Maryland "are good at assessing each child's needs and interests and seeing to it that each gets what they need. They don't exclude anyone."

At Maryland, adults adapt to children rather than forcing children to adapt to them. Says one staff member, "We let their personality come out, allowing them to be

children and individuals." The school's avoidance of rigid behavioral requirements is evident in the way students move through the halls. After assemblies, students file out of the auditorium in loosely formed lines, many in quiet conversation with classmates. In the lunchroom, students are free to talk and interact.

Classroom organization at Maryland supports the ideal of flexibility toward meeting individual student needs. Different groups of students engage in different learning activities within a single classroom. Some students may work in groups at their desks while others spread out on the floor. Because staff are expected to resolve most discipline problems in class, they have the freedom to arrange their classrooms according to what works best to promote order and effective learning.

Students Take Responsibility

Older students guide younger students in many activities including tutoring, computer lab, in the lunchroom, and on the playground. During lunch, one older student joins each table of younger students to maintain order, offer assistance, and model proper behavior. On rainy days when there is no outdoor recess, older students supervise younger students in their classrooms.

Students' clear understanding of school rules and expectations are displayed by their willingness to monitor the conduct of other students. As one classroom assistant puts it, "Peers encourage each other to obey the rules to the point that it 'isn't cool' to disobey the rules. This really eases the burden on teachers."

High expectations for student behavior reach beyond the walls of individual classrooms. Because students know the nearest adult will correct misbehavior, many take on the responsibility to stop inappropriate behavior before an adult steps-in.

Character development activities promote cohesive classrooms. Teachers begin the year by working with students to assemble a list of characteristics of a successful community, and a list of the behavioral traits that best achieve that community. As one teacher explains, "Getting students to come up with desired behaviors helps them to become aware of when they don't exhibit positive behavior."

"As a parent, it's good to know that your child is learning something every day that will help them become a good person."

One teacher builds students' social skills by asking them to evaluate how effectively they are working together. "Too often," she notes, "schools address discipline as something separate from teaching and learning. It ought to be part of the overall plan to educate students."

Getting Families Involved

Maryland involves parents in their children's schooling before problems occur. Teachers send home individual reports on student achievement to allow parents to monitor children's progress and address problems early. Teachers encourage parents to call them at home after regular school hours. Parents hear from teachers when their child does exceptionally well, not just when improvement is needed.

Parents appreciate the school's efforts to keep them informed about what's going on in the school and the district. In two school-published newsletters, "Home and School Connection" and "Maryland Avenue School Council Newsletter," the school informs parents about its strategies for educating children. Title 1 funds support professional development for parents on

topics such as Accelerated Schools and school reform, which help parents to understand and support the school's mission.

Partnering with the Community

Maryland Avenue draws on the surrounding community to support high quality education and enrich children's learning. The Milwaukee Repertory Theater works with older students to put on skits for younger students, teaching children about positive character traits while building relationships between older and younger students. The Medical College of Wisconsin sponsors "Family Science Night" to promote science education and family-school connection, and representatives from the college prepare and teach elaborate, engaging science lessons that teachers would not have the time to prepare.

Most school clubs at Maryland are multi-grade to unify students from a wide range of ages and foster a sense of family. Some clubs involve parents as well. Children are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities that encourage a sense of citizenship. Class visits to a local nursing home, and in-school "jobs" such as student tutoring and recycling are examples of activities that help students to take responsibility for making their school and community a good place to be.

Educating Staff and Students to Prevent Violence

The school has adopted and completed in-service training in the Second Step program, an anti-violence curriculum designed to reinforce positive social behavior. They also practice peer mediation, and employ techniques of the BABES program to help young children develop strong decision-making and coping skills. School staff point to the Rap group, and the availability of guidance counselors and a school psychologist as factors that help to keep student suspensions low.

Madison University High School

Madison University High School is a four-year school serving over 1,600 students; 83% African-American, 9% White, 5% Asian, and 2% Hispanic. 62% of Madison's students qualify for free or reduced price lunches. Madison has one of the lowest high school suspension rates in Milwaukee, having overcome considerable discipline challenges. School administrators recall a few years ago when the school had a 43% attendance rate, the highest rate of truancy in the district (51%), and about 180 suspensions and one large fight in the cafeteria each day. Police were dispatched to the school on a daily basis. In 1995, the school was deemed a failing school and slated to be closed.

The school reopened in 1996 as Madison University High School, under the leadership of a new principal. Faced with a low average GPA and a high number of students who fulfilled graduation requirements in only three years, the school raised expectations for academic achievement, requiring all students to complete a course of study that prepares them for entrance to college. Students at Madison must now complete more course units (25) than at any other district high school, including four years of English, three or more years of Math, Science, and Social Studies, two years of one Foreign Language, and 1 year of Information Systems Technology. The school is implementing an International Baccalaureate Program, allowing students to receive college credit in high school.

Suspension Is A Last Resort

Suspension is not the first option at Madison. When there is a discipline problem, teachers are expected first to handle the issue on their own, reaching out to parents and families to help resolve the situation. Only after teachers have

School Improvement	1997-98	1998-99
Average GPA	1.35	1.66
All students		
Average GPA	1.97	2.27
Students w/ 90% attendance		
Attendance	69%	73.4%
As reported by Madison		
Suspension Rate	12.5%	8.5%[2]

made this initial attempt can the administration become involved. Staff must supply the administration with documentation about the attempted intervention when referring a student. As one teacher stated, "Administrators like the teacher to contact parents with problems before they intervene." This also keeps teachers from relying too much on removing students from the classroom. As one teacher states, "Writing too many referrals will get you ignored."

Since suspension can be issued only by the school administration, limiting opportunities to refer students reduces the number of suspensions. Above all, the principal wants problems dealt with so that students don't miss class due to removal. He states, "We don't want our students to miss class. If a kid loses time from the classroom, that's time you don't ever get back." One Madison student concurs that students who are suspended have "really earned it." When an incident occurs, each party has an opportunity to be heard. Administrators and safety officers provide opportunities for conferencing and conflict resolution.

The principal works with parents to address discipline without suspension, sometimes recommending a student to the school's Knight Transition Academy or forming other agreements with parents, like assigning one student to lunchroom work duty at the parent's request. For less serious offenses such as chronic lack of supplies, guidance counselors meet with students to review expected behavior. When students are suspended, the attendance group, social worker, and guidance counselors work to help suspended students keep up with their schoolwork. Normally, they can assist families in getting work within a 24-hour period.

A Visible School Leader

One teacher who has worked for more than twelve years at Madison attributes much of the school's recent progress to consistent leadership. The principal is now in his fifth year at Madison where "administrators don't change often like at many other schools." Several administrators worked with the principal at his previous post, bringing to Madison a group that had already developed as a team.

The principal keeps tabs on progress by observing his school in action. He tries to make a brief appearance in each classroom at least twice a week. "I might go to one class for 60 seconds and another for five minutes," he explains. "I may stay longer because there is a problem or a teacher might be doing something really interesting. I make mental notes about a million different things." He follows up on what he observes, both positive and negative, mentioning exciting class activities in loudspeaker announcements or recommending a teacher for performance review if he suspects a problem.

Educating Staff About Effective Management

Madison is training all staff in the COMP program (Classroom Organization and Management Program) to help them build management skills, examine their classroom procedures, and organize their classrooms to maintain a positive climate for all students. The program was chosen based on a student suspensions research project in which teachers participated. Seventy-five percent of Madison's teachers have completed the program.

"Most serious incidents can be avoided by managing the classroom in a safe manner and maintaining a relationship with students based on mutual respect."

The principal identifies COMP as one of the most important components of Madison's plan for school safety, helping to reduce the number of discipline referrals by helping staff set clear expectations and defuse classroom incidents. The principal insists that "most serious incidents can be avoided by managing the classroom in a safe manner and maintaining a relationship with students based on mutual respect," and hopes to give teachers the tools to deal with issues before they can escalate. He explains, "If a student misbehaves and a teacher yells, the student can feel personally attacked and will act in his or her own defense, making a minor issue into a large one."

After initial COMP training, teachers rearranged their classrooms to support the new social and academic educational practices. The principal now sees fewer students referred for discipline problems. Teachers who have undergone training confirm that they use the COMP strategies in their classrooms.

Reviewing Staff Effectiveness

While a teacher's discipline referrals are not formally considered as part of professional evaluations, the school does have a standard process for reviewing classroom management effectiveness. One teacher noted that the administration lets the staff know in a discreet way which teachers have the highest number of referrals. If a teacher has problems with classroom discipline, an assistant principal conducts and documents an observation and recommends an intervention to help the teacher.

For existing teachers who do not show improvement after the initial observation, the teacher is recommended for the TEAM program—a district program that helps teachers improve various professional skills. For new teachers, a follow-up visit is made. If there is no improvement the teacher and administrative staff discuss strategies, which in extreme cases may include counseling the person into another profession.

New teachers meet each week as a "support group" to discuss issues and difficulties, and receive feedback from other teachers and the administrators assigned to new teachers. These administrators also handle all discipline referrals for new teachers. Additionally, monthly meetings are held to provide education on topics chosen by new teachers.

Improving School Climate

Once known to the Milwaukee community as the "Madhouse," Madison's climate has improved dramatically in the past few years. Now described as positive and friendly, new and returning teachers experience a "mutual level of respect" among teachers and students at Madison. Teachers now enjoy teaching at Madison, emphasizing its friendly working environment and the substantial departmental support to teachers.

Parents agree, saying that staff and students treat them kindly, and that adults and children get along well. Parents say their children like the school, and enjoy the challenging curriculum as well as the adults and other students.

Building Positive Relationships

One teacher who has been at Madison for twelve years attributes much of the positive interaction among students and staff to the block scheduling program.

Each semester, students select a

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

mid-block activity, which takes place in the middle of the day. Students can choose from activities such as Young Lawyers, "chat rooms" staffed by teachers, movies, and "open gym"—a student health club. Counseling and tutoring services are also available. Administrators claim that no discipline problems occur during mid-block activities because students are in a place where they want to be. Teachers are present only to supervise, and might chat or eat lunch with students. As one administrator describes, "Mid-block breaks down a wall, establishing another role for the teacher in the eyes of students. They realize, 'This is a person I can confide in. This is a *person*.'" A teacher in her second year at Madison cites the mid-block activity as a proactive strategy for minimizing disruptive behavior as it "gives students a chance to blow off steam in a place of their choice."

Block scheduling has also improved attitudes of students, who appreciate having fewer classes each day. One student explains that block scheduling "takes the pressure off students." Another admits that although it was tough to get used to, block scheduling makes for a shorter day. Parents cite the mid-block activities as one of the features of Madison that their children like best. Pleased by the impact of block scheduling overall, teachers note that the program can be difficult for students who are struggling, especially those with weak reading skills.

Smaller School Units

Fostering a sense of community within a school of over 1600 students is a challenge. To create more close-knit settings, the school implemented the Career Majors and International Baccalaureate programs to create "schools-within-a-school." Students "majoring" in Business, Health and Human Service, or Electrical Engineering work with a specific group of teachers and peers as they earn vocational certification. Students majoring in health services, for example, can earn their nursing assistant certificate, even before graduation. The new International Baccalaureate (IB) program will allow students to earn college credit in high school, meeting the needs of students who are ready for challenges beyond the high school curriculum.

Returning Students To the Classroom

Started with assistance from the district's Small Schools Office, the Knight Transition Academy gives students access to the basic curriculum in a small-school setting on a night-school schedule. Students entering the program must apply and meet with parents and teachers to set academic goals. Originally for chronically disruptive students, it now serves all types of "at-risk" students, usually on a temporary basis.

The principal often recommends the Knight program as an alternative to suspension and expulsion, describing the program as "an avenue to channel inappropriate behavior where we can actually change it." More than simple removal from the day program, teachers in the Knight Academy work one-on-one with students to strengthen low academic skills, which often contribute to discipline problems. Schedules can also be adjusted to separate warring students while conflicts are worked out.

"The Knight Academy continues to be a key factor allowing us to offer discipline options other than suspension," says the administration. The program promotes student success by providing assistance and a smaller environment that allows opportunities for social and emotional growth. The Knight program helps students whose life circumstances—including work and family obligations—prevent them from attending school regularly, thus addressing the causes of many attendance problems and helping students stay in school.

Engaging Parents

Madison communicates with parents in a variety of ways, including newsletters, flyers, phone calls, and mailings. Teachers call parents from their classroom to settle problems on the spot. Individual teachers are responsible for initiating contact with parents and documenting all contacts.

Parents feel the school does a good job of keeping them abreast of their child's performance, when they are struggling as well as when they are doing well. According to one parent, "I am contacted when concerns arise. And when he improves, then I am notified of his improvement."

The school works to curb truancy through the "Dial-up" program in which parents are called if a student doesn't show up to the first hour of school. Since the implementation of block scheduling, parent-teacher conferences are held four times a year.

On the second Saturday of each month, the principal holds parent meetings to report on what has happened in the building that month, and what has been done to improve and address problems. The school solicits parent input on school activities and the school budget, and parents who have attended workshops using school Title 1 funds offer reports to other parents.

Partnering with the Community

Madison builds partnerships with the community by acting as a Pioneering Partners Foundation site with Ameritech, hosting MATC courses for Madison students on the high school campus, and bringing to the school successful African American professionals who volunteer their time to mentor students and promote workplace values through the YMCA Black Achievers program. Madison also partners with Coca-Cola and Carroll College.

One teacher is particularly excited about the school's Electronics Advisory Committee, which is made up of consultants from local electronics companies. Participating companies hire students, make donations to support electronics programs, and offer curriculum recommendations to help the school prepare students to be part of the city's workforce.

A Focus on Safety

Teachers and administrators commend the school's eleven Safety Assistants for their consistent and immediate response to classroom incidents. Safety Assistants prevent conflicts by: observing behavior throughout the school building, signing-in visitors; preventing unwanted outsiders; monitoring surveillance cameras; and responding quickly to physical violence. Safety assistants are trained to mediate conflicts, helping students to be effective listeners and allow room for the opinions of others in an argument. Surveillance cameras in the hallways allow safety assistants to monitor and videotape activity.

Because student fights and outbursts frequently occurred in school corridors, new programs were implemented to decrease opportunities for trouble. Block scheduling reduces the time students spend moving from one class to the next. Madison does not use hall passes, providing adult escorts instead. The Triage program, modeled on a hospital admittance system, keeps tardy students from wandering the halls. Students in the halls after the bell are shuttled to the triage room, where they remain until the halls are cleared, and are then sent to class. Students who are late to class the first hour attend a lecture from one of the YMCA Black Achievers speakers who talk to students on topics including job readiness and the importance of being on time.

Understanding Practices That Work

Effective school discipline helps our public schools succeed at their primary purpose—educating all children. As we work to improve school discipline in Milwaukee, our models must be those schools aiming at equitable discipline and academic achievement.

National research shows that schools with effective discipline and high achievement have accomplished this through use of certain "best practices." In general, these "best practices" include:

(1) a focus on conflict prevention and students' social and emotional development;
(2) a fair and clear set of rules that are created, understood, and consistently enforced by all members of the school community;
(3) a challenging academic curriculum; and
(4) a commitment from school staff and the community to work together regularly on improving the school discipline plan.

"Best practices" for improving school discipline are part of a larger framework found in high-achieving urban schools: (1) focused school leadership; (2) a school environment that supports learning; (3) adult learning and collaboration; (4) family and community partnerships; and (5) high quality instruction. Developed by Designs for Change, a Chicago-based research and advocacy group, these "Five Essential Supports for Student Learning" are based on their analysis of a major body of education research on effective urban schools.

We see many of these practices at work in the Milwaukee schools profiled in this report. Like successful schools in Milwaukee, schools that employ these "best practices" work to avoid suspension whenever possible. These examples give us confidence that Milwaukee can maintain orderly schools for children without resorting to frequent suspensions.

1. The School Provides Strong Leadership

- ***The school has a comprehensive, written discipline plan*** for maintaining safety and order, and increasing student achievement. The plan includes strategies to prevent conflict, assist students with chronic behavior problems, and keep "non-learning time" to a minimum.[3]
- ***The school administration sets clear expectations for behavior*** in a written code of conduct that insists on respectful treatment of all students and staff. The code explicitly defines all punishable offenses, discipline procedures, and consequences. School staff ensure that all students are treated equitably and that discipline is administered consistently throughout the building.[4]
- ***School discipline policies acknowledge that misbehavior can be traced to underlying causes***—such as unmet student needs or adverse school conditions—which must be resolved to improve behavior. Prevention policies target common causes of misbehavior by helping students build positive attitudes toward school, by supporting positive student and staff relationships, and by improving classroom management, teaching, and academic achievement.[5]
- ***The school uses out-of-school suspension only as the last resort***, supporting teachers who try to handle discipline in the classroom. When necessary, the school uses in-school suspensions accompanied by academic assistance and behavior support.[6]
- ***The school administration involves school council and school staff in monitoring school discipline***, and creating

and implementing improved policies and practices. Teachers work together to resolve ongoing classroom discipline problems and help each other to reinforce proper behavior.[7]

• ***The school reviews teacher discipline practices*** as part of teacher evaluations. School discipline records of incidents in which teachers refer students to the principal are reviewed to identify staff training needs, and prevent staff from relying on removal and suspension. Administrators and expert teachers visit classrooms regularly to observe teachers' classroom organizing and management skills, and help them to reach improvement goals.[8]

2. The School's Environment Supports Student Learning

• ***School staff ensure that each student feels welcome in the school***. By getting to know each student and encouraging their interests, they convey that each student is a valued member of the school community. Diverse learning activities provide "something for everyone," so that all students experience success in school. Teachers ensure equity in learning and achievement, and integrate multicultural education activities that reflect the diversity of the school population.[9]

• ***The entire community helps the school to develop proactive discipline strategies***. School staff, parents, students, and the community are part of a "student support alliance" committed to supporting students with discipline problems, and promoting positive school attitudes and behavior. They assess how well school discipline practices are working, and redesign policies and practices as needed. Local businesses and community members support youth development by working with the school to create quality community service programs and after school activities for students.[10]

• ***The entire school staff takes responsibility for maintaining order and discipline*** throughout the school building. Teachers see it as their job to monitor behavior and correct misbehavior when it occurs, regardless of whether or not the student is in the teacher's class. All school staff play by the same rules when it comes to discipline, and students know that they will not get away with inappropriate behavior, even when their teacher is not around.[11]

• ***Administration and staff maintain a quality in-school suspension program*** that provides both academic help and behavioral support, allowing the school to avoid expulsions and out-of-school suspension. The quality in-school suspension program is an effective strategy for reducing major and minor disruptive behavior.[12]

• ***Extracurricular activities build ties between students and the school,*** helping to improve attendance, social and emotional growth, and academic performance. The school encourages all students to take part in extracurricular activities and works to remove barriers that prevent any student from participating.[13]

• ***The school is structured around smaller units***, allowing students and teachers to build strong ties by working as teams. Using smaller classes, "schools-within-the-school" structures, and "learning communities" of students and teachers, the school builds students' cooperative skills and strengthens their commitment to school. These strategies help to reduce discipline problems, and improve student behavior, attitude, and engagement in school.[14]

• ***The school teaches self-discipline***, rather than assuming that students already possess such skills. Consistent school

structure, firm limits, and participation in school decision-making help to develop students' sense of responsibility and self-control. Teachers help children to solve their own problems and become responsible for the outcomes of their actions by encouraging students to find ways to express themselves that do not interfere with learning. The school provides direct instruction of social skills by integrating respect, constructive criticism, cooperation, and empathy and consideration for others into the academic curriculum.[15]

• ***Administration and staff address the root causes of truancy and tardiness*** by communicating high expectations for student attendance, rewarding improved attendance, and contacting parents in their home language when students are truant. The school administration designates a staff member or team to: identify students with persistent attendance problems; monitor their attendance and academic progress; and interview students about their reasons for not attending. The school regularly reviews school attendance data and implements services or program changes to improve attendance as needed.[16]

• ***Students with discipline problems are kept in the mainstream program***, and are provided additional support to help them meet expectations for classroom behavior. The school refrains from placing students in special education or alternative programs due to behavioral considerations, and works to reduce the number of referrals for alternative education.[17]

3. Adults Work Together and Strengthen Their Skills

• ***Staff training focuses on proactive discipline methods***, helping administrators and staff to resolve discipline problems in ways that prevent future misbehavior. Training helps staff collaborate more effectively with families of at-risk students, and improve classroom and behavior management skills to allow teachers to spend less time on discipline and more time on teaching.[18]

• ***Staff training provides a clear analysis of the root causes of discipline problems***, discussing common causes of school conflicts and helping staff to identify causes of misbehavior in their own classrooms. Research-based training on effective discipline helps teachers to use data to better manage their classrooms. Teachers learn to use school discipline data—such as student referrals to the principal—to evaluate school-wide discipline, both identifying successes and ways to improve. For special education students, teachers are trained to use IEPs as tools to guide discipline to promote positive social skills.[19]

• ***Training must be accompanied by concrete planning and teacher support***. The principal works to build the staff's commitment to change by communicating expectations that teachers will apply what they learn and by recognizing teachers' successes. Following training, staff roundtables are held to discuss what was taught and to develop a plan to adopt useful practices in the classroom. School administration provides the support and resources to help teachers make changes in the classroom, providing materials and technical assistance, and consulting with teachers on an ongoing basis.[20]

• ***The school educates parents, volunteers, and all school staff about effective discipline strategies***, and involves them in training workshops. By educating all adults in the school, the school ensures consistent expectations for students, and consistent strategies to prevent and effectively deal with discipline problems.[21]

4. Families and the Community Are Welcomed As Partners

• ***School rules and discipline policies are developed in collaboration with families, students, and the community***. Administrators and staff actively involve the school community in identifying school discipline issues and developing ways to respond to problems. In the classroom, teachers engage in problem solving with students to address immediate discipline issues.[22]

• ***All discipline information is clearly communicated to families and students*** at the beginning of the year. Administrators and teachers provide training on the conduct code and discipline procedures and review the information regularly to make certain that students and families understand the rules.[23]

• ***The school involves community agencies in assisting students and families*** with discipline problems. The school provides connections to neighborhood organizations and community agencies that can help with counseling, education, and other needs.[24]

• ***The school contacts families and enlists them as partners*** when children are suspended. Teachers, administrators, and parents collaborate to develop strategies to ensure that students maintain the behavior that is expected at school. The school works to educate parents about effective school discipline strategies and remove barriers that prevent parents from working with school staff.[25]

• ***School staff focus on the positive aspects of students' behavior*** and contact parents to let them know when their children are behaving well.[26]

5. Discipline is Supported by High Quality Instruction

• ***Teachers view students' social and emotional development as part of their job***. Through cooperative learning activities, teachers help students to interact in positive ways with peers, helping children deal with anger and other emotions that might lead to conflicts.[27]

• ***Teachers use engaging learning activities to minimize student misbehavior.*** By creating a classroom climate in which students are challenged and experience success, teachers allow less opportunity and motivation for misbehavior by engaging children in learning.[28]

• ***Teachers hold high expectations for student behavior*** and communicate these clearly at the beginning of the year. Teachers give specific instructions about classroom procedures. All rules are in writing and are regularly reviewed. Classroom rules are positive, state the desired behavior, and are easy to understand and consistently enforced.[29]

• ***Teachers maintain classroom discipline without disrupting learning***. Careful classroom planning, clear rules, and monitoring of students prevents many problems from occurring in the first place. Teachers are trained to diffuse student outbursts so that the class is not disrupted. Disruptive students are reengaged in classroom activities rather than sent to the principal's office.[30]

• ***Teachers model proper behavior*** by treating all students with respect. They use the words and actions that students are expected to use, treat all students fairly, give students their undivided attention, apologize for any wrongdoing, and apply consistent discipline to make it clear that disrespectful behavior has no place in the school.[31]

• ***Teachers help suspended students make up class work*** that was missed while they were out of school, ensuring that suspension does not cause a student to fall behind academically.[32]

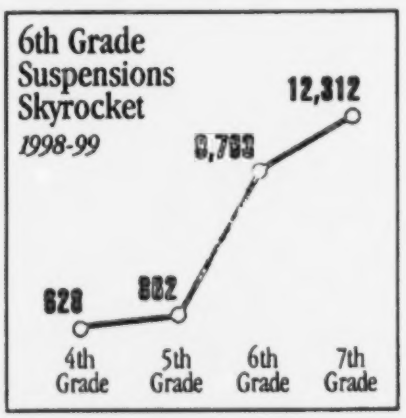
Suspensions Are Too High In Milwaukee

Milwaukee public schools suspend too many children. The yearly issuing of over 55,000 suspensions tells parents and community that suspensions are the major discipline method in too many Milwaukee public schools. Rather than the most frequent discipline tool, suspension should be the last resort.

Nearly one in five Milwaukee public school students are suspended from school each year. Though the school population has decreased slightly over the past five years, the number of students suspended has increased. During the 1999-2000 school year, 55,616 suspensions were given to 19,736 students, showing that many students are being suspended over and over again.

Students of color receive a disproportionate share of suspensions. Among African American students, the number suspended is nearly 1 in 4. In contrast, only about 1 in 9 white students are suspended.

Special education students are suspended more frequently than students in general. While special education students make up about 16% of the public school population, they accounted for 21% of the students suspended in 1999-2000. Of the more than 19,000 students suspended that year, over 4,100 were special education students—about 1 in 4.



Middle school students are suspended most often. More than half of all suspensions in Milwaukee are given to students in grades 6 through 8. Each year, sixth graders receive about ten times as many suspensions as fifth graders.

Even our youngest children are put at risk. During the 1998-99 school year, Milwaukee public schools suspended 805 children in Kindergarten through 3rd grade. With 1255 suspensions issued to these children, as many as half were suspended more than once. There can be little justification for student suspension at these grade levels.[33]

Suspensions in Urban School Districts

District	No. Students	African American	Asian	Hispanic	Native American	White	% Students suspended
Baltimore ('99)	103,000	87%	1%	1%	<1%	11%	10%
Boston ('00)	63,300	49%	9%	27%	<1%	15%	6%
Cleveland ('99)	75,640	71%	1%	8%	<1%	20%	18%
Milwaukee ('00)	99,729	61%	4%	14%	1%	20%	20%
Philadelphia ('00)	205,062	65%	5%	13%	<1%	18%	15%

Milwaukee Uses Suspensions More than Other Districts

The Milwaukee public schools suspend a greater percentage of their students than other large city school districts. For comparison, we have selected urban public school districts with student populations that are as close in size to Milwaukee as possible while also reflecting a similar racial composition.

According to data reported by these school districts, Milwaukee suspensions exceeded those of all four comparison districts. In the School District of Philadelphia, an urban district twice the size of Milwaukee with nearly identical racial composition, 15% of students received a suspension in 1999-2000. Because many of these were in-school suspensions, fewer than 15% of students were sent home from school. That same year, Milwaukee issued out of school suspensions to 20% of its students.[34]

22

Suspensions Harm Our Children

Our children need to be safe in school. School classrooms, halls, and lunchrooms must be characterized by order and respect so that students can develop strong academic and social skills. Any plan to achieve this by means of suspension is doomed. Years of research are conclusive: suspensions can make the situation worse.

Out-of-school suspensions fail to improve behavior. Suspensions punish the symptoms of behavior rather than resolving the underlying issues that cause a child to act out. Because suspensions do not resolve the motivation for inappropriate behavior, the misbehavior is likely to reoccur.[35]

In many cases, suspensions lead to more disruptive behavior and further discipline problems. Many students view punitive discipline as a personal attack, challenging them to escalate disruptive behavior. For students already at-risk for delinquency, out-of-school suspensions deny them adult supervision and provide opportunities to socialize with deviant or even dangerous peers.[36]

Because suspensions don't resolve behavior problems, they often lead to further suspensions. The first time a student is suspended from school, he or she immediately becomes at-risk for a second suspension. For many students, suspensions do nothing more than encourage future suspensions. Nearly half of student suspensions are due to repeat offenses.[37]

Suspensions target students who already face the greatest challenges. Poor, minority, special education, and low-achieving students are at the greatest risk. Poor academic performance is actually a *predictor* of school exclusion. Students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch and minority students—particularly males—receive suspensions at highly disproportionate rates.[38]

By suspending students, we put them at risk for school failure and dropping out. Students who are suspended are more likely to receive failing grades and be held back. Suspended students tend to develop poor attitudes about school, and are much more likely to drop out. In the worst-case scenario, a school may actually use suspension as a "push out" tool to encourage low-achieving and disruptive students to leave school altogether.[39]

We Must Educate All Children

To some, reducing student suspensions may sound risky. Tragedies in a small number of schools around the country raise parents' fears about the threat of violence in schools. Suspension seems like a way to protect students and school staff from harm.

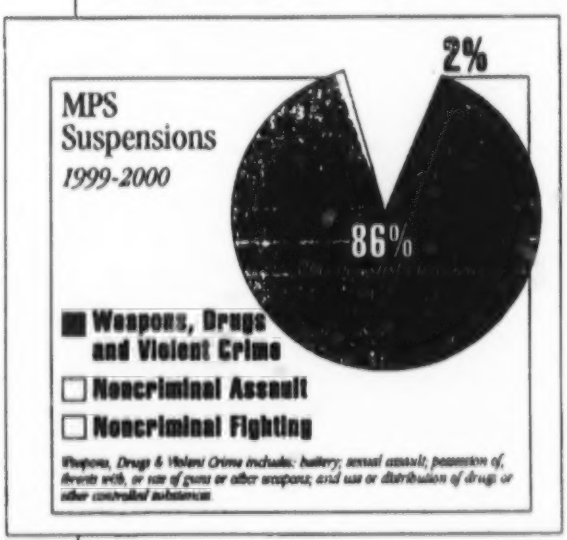
Clearly, any student who poses danger to anyone in the school building should be removed from school. Furthermore, there is no place in school for weapons or drugs.

Most suspensions, however, are not due to violent behavior. According to federal statistics, drugs, weapons, and gang-related behaviors account for only a fraction of suspensions. The majority of suspensions are given for less serious infractions that do not threaten school safety.[40]

This national trend is echoed in Milwaukee where the most common reasons for suspending students are:

- refusal to work or follow instructions;
- classroom disruption; and
- profanity.

These three infractions accounted for nearly 75% of student suspensions during the 1999-2000 school year. Only 1% of Milwaukee suspensions are related to weapons or drugs.[41]


MPS
Suspensions
1999-2000
2%
86%
Weapons, Drugs and Violent Crime
Noncriminal Assault
Noncriminal Fighting
Weapons, Drugs & Violent Crime includes: battery; sexual assault; possession of, threats with, or use of guns or other weapons; and use or distribution of drugs or other controlled substances.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Some believe that suspensions are necessary to deal with troublemakers who must be suspended to protect other children "who want to learn." That is not what is happening in Milwaukee. Last year, more than 93% of suspensions were for offenses that violated the district's rules about maintaining an "Appropriate Learning Environment." This large number of suspensions for relatively minor offenses is not about the need to deal with a small number of disruptive students. Instead, it is an indicator of a district-wide need for strategies to improve daily classroom management.

Even if we give credence to the idea that suspensions support learning for some students at the expense of others, the argument is irrelevant to public education. It is the job of our public schools to provide a quality education to all students—not just some. It is not the place of parents, educators, students, or community members to decide which children our public schools will educate. Our energies are better-spent developing strategies to teach all students effectively.

Achieving District-Wide Reform in Milwaukee

Achieving effective discipline is one of many competing challenges facing large urban school districts. Feeling pressured to raise grades or test scores, many schools delay discipline improvements while focusing on teaching and learning—not realizing that the two are inexorably linked. Educational practices that support effective discipline minimize disruptions, helping students and teachers to resolve behavior problems while engaging in effective teaching and learning.

While individual schools must ultimately carry out the practices that lead to safe and orderly schools that educate all students, the Milwaukee public school district must set a tone for positive change. Before schools can stop relying on suspensions, the district must make improving school discipline practices a high priority. Without clear leadership and support from the district, principals and teachers are not often willing to take the risks involved in changing discipline practices.[42]

In addition to providing clear direction, the district must set policies that help all schools ensure equitable and effective discipline, and high achievement for all students. School staff must know that the district will hold them accountable for implementing discipline practices that keep students in the classroom.

The Cleveland Municipal School District

One urban school district is setting such a course. Since the arrival of a new district CEO in 1998, the Cleveland Municipal School District has created and begun implementation of a strategic plan for "Educating Cleveland's Children." A major component is adoption of district-wide policies that: (1) maximize quality learning by improving attendance and decreasing student time out of class; and (2) ensure safe, secure, orderly schools. The district's policies governing rights, responsibilities, and discipline were revised in August of 1999 to support this new priority. As a strategy to improve student achievement, discipline policies now minimize the use of suspensions by increasing alternatives.[43]

As in Milwaukee, student suspensions in the Cleveland public schools have been very high in recent years. In 1998-99 more than 17% of students were suspended. Given the negative impact of suspension on student achievement, it is not surprising that the district has earned low marks in the past, receiving "emergency" status in the state's ranking of Ohio public schools. Although smaller than Milwaukee, Cleveland Municipal School District looks quite similar in terms of demographics.

In contrast to Milwaukee, *Cleveland is drawing on research-based best practices to focus school discipline away from punishment and suspension.*

Limiting Authority to Suspend Students

Although Cleveland's policies have always contained language suggesting that out-of-school suspensions are to be used as a last resort, the new CEO felt strongly that polices should include explicit interventions that must be completed before students can be removed from school. Previously, principals had the authority to issue a suspension for violations of any kind. Under the new rules, infractions are reclassified into Level 1, 2, and 3 offenses. Principals can no longer issue a suspension for a Level 1 violation, the least serious of the three levels—which includes smoking, truancy, plagiarism, and being late to class. If a student commits the same minor offense repeatedly, and the problem is deemed chronic, the principal can report the situation to their Regional Superintendent, who may approve suspension, recommend an alternative program, or deny the request if it is determined that the school's attempted intervention was insufficient. When referring students, the school must supply documentation of incidents and interventions. In the past, the majority of suspensions were issued for Level 1 offenses. These limitations effected a 22% decrease in the number of suspensions issued during the CEO's first year.[44]

For Level 2 offenses—which include verbal threats, bringing alcohol to school, and fighting—suspensions can be issued for no longer than 5 days. If a student is suspended three times for the same such offense, the Regional Superintendent is notified. For Level 3 infractions—which represent crime and serious safety threats to others in the school—the principal's

authority is not restricted. Concerned by the number of very young children who were given out-of-school suspensions, the CEO effected a moratorium on suspensions for students in Kindergarten through third grade.

Some schools found it difficult to relinquish their authority to suspend students, trying other ways to send them home. According to district policy, a student must be informed prior to suspension of the reason why he or she is being suspended in a form entitled "Intent to Suspend." To hide a suspension, some schools would not actually fill out the form, writing instead a note at the top indicating that the student should remain out of school until a certain date. The district became aware of this deception through phone calls from parents and responded with workshops to remind administrators of students' due process rights. Administrators were told that the principal of the school would be held responsible if there were any more complaints from parents, and this would be noted on the principal's performance evaluation.

Smaller Schools for Students with Discipline Problems

The CEO also established a number of alternative schools based on the concept of "small learning communities" and the success of small schools in New York City, particularly the Options programs. Program changes have been driven by the vision of the CEO, who is very familiar with the small schools research. Following the example of New York, non-regular school programs are referred to as "options" rather than "alternative schools."

Under the district's initiative, two "option" schools were opened to serve students who were frequently in trouble for disruptive behavior. In the past, these students would have been considered for suspension or possible expulsion. Based on the "small schools" model, each school serves about 175 students in grades four through twelve. Students have usually committed Level 2 and 3 infractions. However, when the Regional Superintendent is approached by a principal to deal with a student with chronic discipline problems of the Level 1 type, the student may be referred to an "option" school for a period of time. This happens most for middle school students, where discipline problems are most frequent.

The district's Phoenix Program is another "Options" program, which provides school placements for students who probably would have been expelled in the past. The district contracts with eight local YMCAs for facilities, staff, and 190 student seats. Of these, 40 seats are maintained for temporary assignment of chronic Level 1 and Level 2 offenders, who usually enter the program for between 80 days and one year. The program also enrolls students who have been expelled from the district for a finite period. The idea that all students will be returned to the regular classroom is central to the "Options" Programs.

The district has also opened three schools for over-aged middle school students, each of which serves about 200 students. The previous year, this population represented the majority of students in the initial "option" schools, with most students at least three years behind grade level in academic achievement. These new schools eased demand on the initial programs, and provided students with access to additional assistance. In addition to educational services, the schools provide counseling and mental health services, and partner with outside agencies to offer students and families a wide array of supports.

Parents must sign a contract before their child can attend an "options" program. According to the contract, parents must be active, picking up their child's report card in person and meeting regularly with teachers. While the district strives to require parental involvement to help ensure student success, they admit that students do not necessarily become ineligible if parents do not fulfill all requirements. However, the Parent/Community Room is the largest room in most schools.

The new Cleveland "options" schools are the first in a series of planned schools that each have a different mission. Some will focus on improving behavior and academics; others will follow in the "magnet school" tradition, with each providing a professional or academic specialty. One academically oriented "options" school being developed in partnership with a community college will serve students with and without behavior problems who meet higher academic criteria, expanding opportunities for students whose behavior problems may stem from a lack of engagement or challenge in the traditional setting.

In-school Suspension Rooms In Every School

Mandatory in-school suspension rooms in every Cleveland public school ensure that students can stay in school, even if trouble occurs in the classroom. Already in use by schools able to identify resources, the mandatory district-wide program was instituted as a component of the most recent labor agreement with the teachers union. The district conceded to teachers the authority to remove a student temporarily on the condition that the use of suspensions would be limited and that each school would have an in-school suspension room. Each suspension room is staffed by a teacher or paraprofessional and must be "a learning center" that supports students' academic progress. If a referring teacher does not send class work along with a student, suspension room staff have a library of school texts and can assign work appropriate to the student's grade level, and the subjects he or she is missing.

While change is being driven mainly by a strong leadership at the top, local schools are encouraged to develop program "options" and "interventions" to assist their students in resolving discipline issues before district administration needs to intervene.

Building Relations with the Community

Implementation of the "Options" schools raised concerns within the Cleveland community. Educators and citizens wary of alternative schools were concerned that such schools would be dumping grounds for students. Neighbors of the buildings to be used—once closed school buildings that were refurbished and reopened—worried about impacts on the neighborhood. To address these concerns, the Superintendent of Option/Alternative Schools and other administrators conducted comprehensive outreach efforts, meeting with citizens and neighborhood groups to "sell" them on the program, communicating the schools' very positive mission, and explaining their basis in effective programs in other urban districts. With community businesses providing funds to revamp the previously closed schools, the "options" schools were offered as meeting and event sites for community groups. The district placed a priority on school organization, determined to present the public with clean, orderly, and well-run schools. Citizens were very vocal in the beginning, expressing concerns and even protesting the new schools, but few do so now as positive results have been seen.

The CEO works to stay connected with the community by holding periodic open meetings called "Conversations with the CEO." These are held by region, with a school serving as a central meeting place. At these meetings, the CEO takes questions directly from parents and community members, bringing her cabinet along with her so that questions and concerns can be answered on the spot by appropriate officials. Six of the meetings were held during the first semester of school. She holds similar meetings with teachers to address their questions and concerns.

Ongoing Support for Disciplined Students

The district plans to revamp the Office of Hearing and Appeals—which conducts suspension and expulsion hearings—to provide more support to help students improve their situation. Hearing officers work on the September-to-June school schedule, often losing track of students over the summer. District officials feel this resulted in a punitive model in which a shortage of officers spent all of their time

issuing disciplinary actions, with little opportunity to support student improvement and prevent future problems. To remedy this, the district is shifting to a 48-week contract and expanding the staff. Each hearing officer will be held responsible for following-up with their students, functioning more as a caseworker encouraging and supporting individual progress.

Clear Expectations for All

The district's Student Handbook also stands as an example of effective school discipline, describing responsibilities and conduct expected of parents, teachers, principals, and students, and outlining the rights of each. The discipline policies of the Cleveland Municipal School District promote a philosophy of shared responsibility, placing expectations on students, employees, parents/guardians, and citizens to work together to ensure successful operation of the schools. By contrast, the Milwaukee Public School's Student Handbook begins by presenting conduct that violates the student code and the resulting punishments, setting a tone of punishment before any explanation of expected behavior. While the Milwaukee handbook details rights and responsibilities, these do not extend beyond parents and students.

For example, the Milwaukee handbook states that "students will work toward academic achievement by attending school regularly," and that "parents have the responsibility to promote prompt and regular attendance."[45]

The clear implication is that promoting good attendance is solely the job of students and parents. Cleveland student attendance policies state that the schools shall maintain a school climate conducive to learning, support good attendance patterns by developing and implementing instructional programs and strategies designed to encourage lifelong learning, and encourage students to improve attendance and punctuality.[46]

In Cleveland, it is the job of schools to inspire students to attend by providing a supportive environment and quality learning experience.

In Cleveland, each member of the school community—parent, teacher, principal, and student—has certain rights that must be protected, and certain responsibilities that must be upheld before a school can do its job. To promote cooperation, policies make explicit the right of each person to be treated with respect and dignity as well as each person's responsibility to treat other members of the school community with respect and dignity. School policy emphasizes partnership, and the shared responsibility of all members of the school community to support safety, order, and learning.

Recommendations for Improving Discipline in Milwaukee

Ensuring effective discipline and high achievement for all children in our public schools requires the commitment of all staff and members of the school community. Milwaukee parents and community are ready to support the schools and the district in pursuing improved policies and practices that help to realize *Safe & Orderly Schools That Educate All Students*.

School Level

There is much that individual schools can do to reduce student suspensions, and improve discipline and achievement. The most successful efforts follow from a comprehensive plan developed collaboratively by the school administration, staff, parents, students, and community members. A clear written plan helps a school community identify and address all areas of concern, and helps ensure that all members of the school community carry out a common approach to school discipline. We offer suggestions to help school communities develop a plan for school discipline, and are ready to work with school communities that desire assistance in the assessment process. The major elements of a plan include:

Assess school discipline practices to identify critical needs:

- Ask parents, students, teachers, and other staff to identify successes and shortcomings of current school discipline.
- Find out how parents, students, teachers, and other staff characterize the school's approach to discipline.
- Gather information on detentions, in-school and out-of-school suspensions, and other student removals to determine which students are being disciplined, how often, and for what reasons.
- Gather information about academic performance of suspended students and other students with discipline problems.

Compare your school's practices to research-based "best practices" for effective discipline and high achievement:

- Which "best practices" for school discipline are being used in your school?
- Which school programs and practices reflect these "best practices?"
- How can programs and practices that reflect "best practices" be expanded or incorporated into other aspects of school life?
- Which "best practices" can help address issues of concern to members of your school community?

Develop a plan to improve school discipline and student achievement:

- Using the "Five Essential Supports for Student Learning" and the "best practices" outlined in this report, develop specific actions your local school can take to improve aspects of school discipline

deemed most critical by parents, students, and the school community.
- Connect with parents, teachers, and students at Milwaukee public schools that are succeeding at achieving effective discipline while improving student achievement to enlist their help with this plan.
- Meet with school leadership (including the school principal, school council, lead teachers and staff, parent-teacher organization, and student leaders) to discuss barriers and opportunities for improvement. With their help, develop a specific timeline for change.
- Monitor the school's success in implementing these improvements and report this progress to all members of the school community.
- Establish a "working group" that represents all members of the school community to continue making steady progress toward establishing a comprehensive school-wide discipline program that supports high achievement for all students.

District Level

Strong district level leadership can help schools to avoid student suspensions, even in an urban school district where high suspensions have been the norm. If Milwaukee students and teachers are to reclaim learning time, the Milwaukee public school district administration must set policy that helps schools to resolve discipline problems, reduce suspensions, and implement alternatives that help children succeed in school. Here, we offer concrete steps to help the district meet this challenge.

The following recommendations are based on policies and practices proven through research to promote effective and equitable discipline in urban schools. They also reflect important concerns of Milwaukee parents, educators, and citizens who demand that our public schools educate all children well. Community members agree on the importance of effective discipline, but few argue that suspensions help achieve this. The first-hand experiences of parents and advocates with discipline practices that do not support children's education have given rise to clear priorities for improvement.

To realize *Safe & Orderly Schools That Educate All Students* in Milwaukee, the public school district must make clear demands of the schools, and support the schools as they strive to meet these raised expectations:

Reduce suspensions for less serious misbehavior:
- Reexamine policies aimed at gang prevention to ensure that students are not being suspended simply for fashion or cultural displays.
- Restrict school authority to issue out-of-school suspensions for offenses that do not present safety threats, such as refusal to work, lack of supplies, and classroom disruption.

Help teachers resolve discipline problems in the classroom:
- Educate all staff on effective classroom and behavior management, enabling teachers to defuse classroom disruptions on their own.
- Set guidelines requiring teachers to attempt interventions for non-violent discipline issues before referring students to the administration.

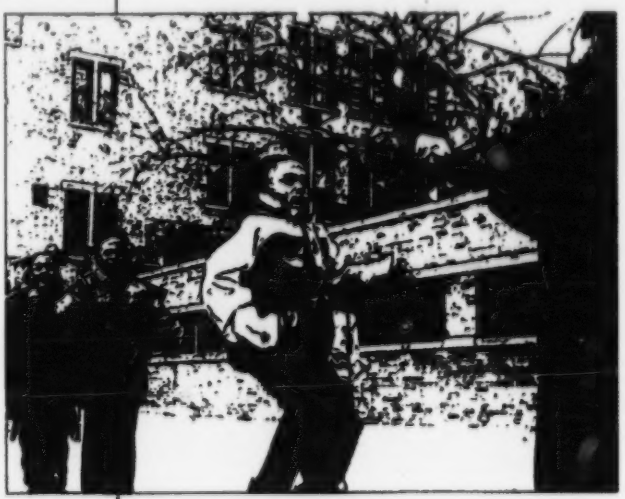
Hold schools accountable for effective discipline:
- Make student suspensions a Tier One measure in evaluating school administration performance, rewarding schools that implement alternatives and reduce out of school suspensions.
- Enact disciplinary measures for schools that send students home without an official suspension.

- Ensure that all schools report student suspensions data and that reports reflect correct information. Make this information easily available to the public.
- Review suspensions data before and since the implementation of the 1999 Code of Classroom Conduct to determine if policy changes are needed to ensure that the code improves school discipline and achievement rather than merely helping schools to remove students from the classroom.

Help students meet expectations:
- Provide learning activities that teach all students conflict resolution and social skills.
- Increase behavioral supports for special needs students transitioning into regular classrooms to ensure their success in challenging environments.
- Provide in-school alternatives to suspension, where students receive academic and behavioral assistance.

Invite parent and community member support for school discipline efforts:
- Involve parents in resolving discipline issues before suspension is considered.
- Set school polices that encourage school visits by parents and community members who want to get involved in their children's education.

Clarify expectations of all members of the school community:
- Hold trainings to ensure that all students, parents, and all school staff understand school policies and expected conduct as outlined in the *Handbook on Rights and Responsibilities*.
- Revise the handbook to include expectations of teachers and other school staff in areas relating to discipline.



32

Parents, Students & Community

You are vital to school and district efforts to improve school discipline and achievement for all students. School discipline plans must draw on your ideas about how discipline can best support learning. Working with your school to evaluate current practices helps you to understand how discipline affects your child's education—whether your child is benefiting from research-proven strategies for teaching self-discipline and building positive school climate, or if frequent suspensions are the norm. By helping your school develop proactive ways to minimize discipline problems, you act as an advocate for your child's education.

The "Parents School Discipline Checklist" found in the Appendix B can help you think about the discipline methods used in your school. The School Level recommendations listed above describe action steps to help school-based teams develop a comprehensive school plan to improve discipline and achievement. You can help your school begin this important work soon by:

- Speaking to other parents about information on the Parent's Checklist and finding parents who will participate on the school's team to review discipline, and to plan for improvement.
- Building parent support for improving practices by raising the issue at PTA or Parent Council meetings, emphasizing the connection between positive school discipline and high student achievement.
- Informing the school administration of parents' interest in working with school staff on an ongoing basis to develop and monitor a plan to improve discipline and achievement, and assisting the administration to seek out other interested parents, students, and community members.

We need your help to press for district-wide policy changes that support all schools in implementing best practices for effective discipline and high achievement. Be sure to join our mailing list to receive announcements about citywide workshops and events in the campaign to promote *Safe & Orderly Schools That Educate All Students.* You can support district-wide improvement in the following ways:

- Attend school board meetings on school discipline and achievement, using public comment periods to communicate the importance of using best practices for effective discipline.
- Contact your district School Board Director to encourage support for improved discipline practices.
- Identify others in your church or community organization who may be interested in addressing issues of suspensions, school discipline, and student achievement from a community-wide perspective.

Milwaukee Catalyst works directly with local school, faith, and community organizations to help community members understand effective school discipline practices. We are available to conduct workshops for interested groups that explain how your organization can be involved in supporting effective discipline and high achievement in our public schools.

Endnotes & Resources

[1] Milwaukee Public Schools, *1998-1999 Accountability Report*, December 1999. Qualitative data gathered during interviews conducted at Maryland Avenue during spring 2000.

[2] Milwaukee Public Schools, *Multi-Year School and District Data Summary*, January 2000; Attendance data provided by Madison University High School. Qualitative data gathered during interviews conducted at Madison University High during spring, summer, and fall 2000.

[3] Irene MacDonald, "The De-Meaning of Schools: Seeking a Safe and Caring Environment," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, March 24-28, 1997 (ERIC ED410684); Kenneth Meyers, and George Pawlas, "The Principal and Discipline," *Elementary Principal Series No. 5*, Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Education Foundation, 1989 (ERIC ED315915).

[4] Bobby G. Malone, and Cheryl Tietjens, "A Reexamination of Classroom Rules," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, October 14-17, 1998 (ERIC ED425129); Mary K. Fitzsimmons, "School-wide Behavioral Management Systems." ERIC/OSEP Digest No. E563, 1998 (ERIC ED417515); Oliver C. Moles, "Student Misconduct and Intervention," *School Safety*, pp. 4-7, Winter 1991 (ERIC EJ422796).

[5] William W. Wayson, and Others, "Handbook for Developing Schools with Good Discipline," Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, 1982 (ERIC ED215440); Irwin A. Hyman, and Others, "Policy and Practice in School Discipline: Past, Present, and Future," Paper presented at the "Safe Schools, Safe Students: A Collaborative Approach to Achieving Safe, Disciplined and Drug-Free Schools Conducive to Learning" Conference, Washington, DC, October 28-29, 1994 (ERIC ED383960); "Behavior Problems: What's a School To Do?" Feature Article from the newsletter, *Addressing Barriers to Learning*, vol.2 no. 2, Los Angeles, CA: Clearinghouse of the Center for Mental Health in Schools of UCLA, 1997 (ERIC ED425261).

[6] Susan C. Kaeser, "Orderly Schools that Serve All Children; A Review of Successful Schools in Ohio," Cleveland, OH: Citizen's Council for Ohio Schools, 1979 (ERIC ED181150); *Not Just Punishment: Discipline in Schools That Work*, Chicago, IL: Alternative Schools Network and Designs for Change, 1984; William W. Wayson, and Thomas J. Lasley, "Climates for Excellence: Schools That Foster Self-Discipline," *Phi Delta Kappan*, vol. 65 no. 6, pp. 419-21, February 1984 (ERIC EJ293137).

[7] Joan Gaustad, "School Discipline," *ERIC Digest 78*, December 1992; K. Meyers, and G. Pawlas (1989); O. Moles (1991).

[8] Jeffrey R. Sprague, George Sugai, Robert Horner, and Hill M. Walker, "Using Office Discipline Referral Data to Evaluate School-Wide Discipline and Violence Prevention Interventions," *OSSC Bulletin*, vol.42 n.2, Winter 1999 (ERIC ED427438); Gloria Rossi, and Bev Tepper, "Ensuring Student Success through Teacher Evaluation," 1998 (ERIC ED426970).

[9] K. Dwyer, D. Osher, and C. Warger, *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 1998; William W. Wayson, and Gay Su Pinnell, "Creating a Living Curriculum for Teaching Self-Discipline," In *Helping Teachers Manage Classrooms*, 1982 (ERIC ED218717); Shi-Chang Wu, and Others, "Student Suspension: A Critical Reappraisal," 1980 (ERIC ED224087).

[10] Matt Gushee, "Student Discipline Policies," *ERIC Digest*, No. 12, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 1984 (ERIC ED259455); O. Moles (1991); K. Meyers, and G. Pawlas (1989).

[11] M. Fitzsimmons (1998).

[12] Hayes M. Mizell, "Designing and Implementing Effective In-School Alternatives to Suspension," *Urban Review*, vol.10 no.3, pp. 213-26, Fall 1978 (ERIC EJ191684); Desmond J. Leaf, "Inschool Suspension Programs for At-Risk Students," Eugene, OR: Oregon School Study Council, University of Oregon, 1987 (ERIC ED282279).

[13] Eileen O' Brien, and Mary Rollefson, "Extracurricular Participation and Student Engagement. Education and Policy Issues: Statistical Perspectives," June 1995 (ERIC ED384097); Barbara N. Young, Carol Helton, and Marilyn E. Whitley, "Impact of School-Related, Community-Based, and Parental Involvement Activities on Achievement of At-Risk Youth in the High School Setting," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, Memphis, TN, November 12-14, 1997 (ERIC ED414533).

[14] Mary Anne Raywid, "Downsizing Schools in Big Cities. *ERIC Digest* No. 112," March 1996 (ERIC ED393958).

[15] William W. Wayson, "Developing Schools That Teach Self-Discipline," 1980 (ERIC ED196169); "Behavior Problems: What's a School To Do?" (1997).

[16] National Coalition of Advocates for Students, *The Good Common School*, Boston, MA: NCAS, 1991, pp. 209; S. Kaeser (1979).

[17] Alan Gartner, and Dorothy Kerzner Lipsky, "Beyond Special Education: Toward a Quality System for All Students," *Harvard Educational Review*, vol.57 no.4, pp.367-95, November 1987 (ERIC EJ363081); National Coalition of Advocates for Students, "Misclassification: A Barrier to Excellence in Schools," Steps 2(2), NCAS, September 1985; Martha Doolittle, "Families Communicate Pilot Project," Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District publication 97.15, 1998 (ERIC ED430163).

[18] M. Doolittle (1998); Edmund T. Emmer, and Others, "Improving Classroom Management and Organization in Junior High Schools: An Experimental Investigation. R & D Report No. 6153," Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, December 1982 (ERIC Clearinghouse SP026515).

[19] I. Hyman (1994); E. Emmer (1982); Sprague, and Others (1999); Gretchen Butera, and Others "IEPS, Students with Behavior Problems and School Discipline Policies: A Collision Course," *In Promoting Progress in Times of Change: Rural Communities Leading the Way*, March 1997 (ERIC ED406103).

[20] Sheila A. Allison, "The Development of Implementation of Behavior Management Strategies to Decrease Discipline Referrals and Increase Teaching Time in the Classroom at the Secondary Level," Ed.D. Practicum, Nova Southeastern University, 1999 (ERIC ED430368).

[21] K. Meyers, and G. Pawlas (1989); M. Fitzsimmons (1998).

[32] Donald J. Layne, and Donald R. Grossnickle, "Real School Safety Depends upon Safe-Oriented Discipline Policies," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Illinois Principals Association, Chicago, IL, October 21-24, 1990 (ERIC ED330028); I. MacDonald (1997); O. Moles (1991); K. Meyers, and G. Pawlas (1989).

[33] Joan Gaustad (1993); K. Meyers, and G. Pawlas (1989).

[34] K. Dwyer, and Others (1998).

[35] K. Dwyer, and Others (1998); Oliver C. Moles, "Reaching All Families: Creating Family-Friendly Schools," 1996 (ERIC ED400117); M. Doolittle (1998).

[36] Denise C. Gottfredson, Gary D. Gottfredson, and Lois G. Hybl, "Managing Adolescent Behavior: A Multi-Year, Multi School Experiment, Report No. 50," Baltimore, MD: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, November 1990 (ERIC ED333549).

[37] Lori Korinek, and Patricia A. Popp, "Collaborative Mainstream Integration of Social Skills with Academic Instruction," *Preventing School Failure*, vol.41 no.4, pp. 148-52, Summer 1997 (ERIC EJ555503); "Behavior Problems: What's a School To Do?" (1997).

[38] Talbot Bielefeldt, "Classroom Discipline: Research Roundup," Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals, February 1989 (ERIC ED318133); Denise G. Gottfredson, and others, "Reducing Disorderly Behavior in Middle Schools, Report No. 37," Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, 1989 (ED320654); S. Kaeser (1979).

[39] Helen Pete Bain, and Roseanne Jacobs, "The Case for Smaller Classrooms and Better Teachers," Alexandria, VA: National Association of Elementary School Principals, September 1990 (ERIC Clearinghouse EA022158).

[40] Kathleen Cotton, *Effective School Practices: A Research Synthesis 1995 Update*, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (www.nwrel.org); Susan K. Lynn, "Create an Effective Learning Environment," *Strategies*, vol.7 n.4, pp. 14-17, January 1994 (ERIC EJ476829); *Not Just Punishment* (1984).

[41] William J. Kreidler, "The Caring Classroom: Cultivating Courtesy," *Instructor*, vol. 105 no. 4, pp. 22-23, Nov-Dec 1995 (ERIC EJ522346).

[42] Thomas J. Lasley, and William W. Wayson, "Characteristics of Schools with Good Discipline," *Educational Leadership*, vol.40 no.3, pp. 28-81, December 1982 (ERIC EJ272637).

[43] Milwaukee Public Schools, *Monthly Suspensions Summary*, Year End 1999-2000; Milwaukee Public Schools, *Monthly Suspensions Summary*, Year End 1998-1999; Public Policy Forum, *Public Schooling in the Milwaukee Metropolitan Area*, 2000, pp.16 & 18.

[44] *Baltimore*: Baltimore City Public Schools (Office of Research, Evaluation, & Testing), and Maryland Justice Policy Institute; *Boston*: Boston Pubic Schools, Chief of Safety Services; *Cleveland*: Ohio Department of Education District Report Card, www.made.state.md.us; *Milwaukee*: Milwaukee Public Schools, *Monthly Suspensions Summary, Year End 1999-2000*; *Philadelphia*: School District of Philadelphia, Division of School and Student Progress.

[45] S. Kaeser (1979); Susan C. Kaeser, "Suspensions in School Discipline," *Education and Urban Society*, vol.11 no.4, pp. 465–84, 1979; Anne Wheelock, *The Way Out: Student Exclusion Practices in Boston Middle Schools*, Boston, MA: Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 1986; Russ Skiba, and Reece Peterson, "The Dark Side of Zero Tolerance: Can Punishment Lead to Safe Schools?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 1999, pp.372-382.

[46] R. Skiba, and R. Peterson (1999); Virginia K. Constenbader, and Samia Markson, "School Suspension: A Survey of Current Policies and Practices," *NASSP Bulletin*, vol.78, pp. 103-107, 1994; Denise C. Gottfredson, "Developing Effective Organizations to Reduce School Disorder," In *Strategies to Reduce Student Misbehavior*, O. C. Moles (ed.), Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1989 (ERIC No. ED311608).

[47] C. Bowditch, "Getting Rid of Troublemakers: High School Disciplinary Procedures and the Production of Dropouts," *Social Problems*, vol.40, pp. 493-507, 1993; V. Constenbader, and S. Markson (1994); A. Wheelock (1986); Tary Tobin, and Others, "Patterns in Middle School Discipline Records," Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, vol.4 no.2, pp. 82-94, April 1996 (ERIC EJ524458).

[48] Gale M. Morrison, and Barbara D'Incau, "The Web of Zero Tolerance: Characteristics of Students Who Are Recommended for Expulsion from School," *Education and Treatment of Children*, vol. 20, pp. 316-35, 1997; R. Skiba, R. Peterson, and T. Williams, "Office Referrals and Suspension: Disciplinary Intervention in Middle Schools, *Education and Treatment of Children*," vol.20 no.3, pp. 295-315, 1997; S. C. Wu, W. T. Pink, R. L. Crain, and O. Moles, "Student Suspension: A Critical Reappraisal," *The Urban Review*, vol.14 no.4, pp. 245-303, 1982.

[49] Frank M. Howell, and Wolfgang Frese, "Early Transition into Adult roles: Some Antecedents and Outcomes." *American Educational Research Journal*, vol. 19, pp. 51-73, 1982; Gary Wehlage, "At-Risk Students and the Need for High School Reform," *Education*, vol. 107, pp. 18-28, 1987; Ruth B. Ekstrom, and Others, "Who Drops Out of High School and Why? Findings from a National Study," *Teacher's College Record*, vol.87 no.3, pp.356-73, spring 1986; Russell J. Skiba, "Zero Tolerance, Zero Evidence: A Critical Analysis of School Disciplinary Practice," Research Review Submitted to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Feburary 9, 2000.

[50] National Council on Education Statistics, *Violence and Discipline Problems in the U.S. Public Schools*, 1996-97.

[51] Milwaukee Public Schools, *Monthly Suspension Summary: Year End 1999-00*, July 2000.

[52] National Coalition of Advocates for Students, *The Good Common School*, Boston, MA: NCAS, 1991, pp. 271.

[53] Cleveland Municipal School District, Strategic Plan for "*Educating Cleveland's Children*," 1999; Unless otherwise noted, all other information taken from telephone interview with the Superintendent of Options/Alternative Schools, December 2000.

[54] As reported by Cleveland Municipal School District, Office of Options/Alternative Schools.

[55] Milwaukee Public Schools, *Parent/Student Handbook on Rights, Responsibilities, & Discipline*, 1999-2000.

[56] Cleveland Municipal School District, *Student Handbook: Rights and Responsibilities*, August 1999 (www.cmsdnet.net).

Resources

Online Info About Your School or District is available from the Wisconsin State Department of Public Instruction. Visit the WINSS Successful School Guide (http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/selschool.asp) or the School Performance Reports (www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/spr/index.html).

The following agencies can provide additional information about many school programs referenced in this report:

Accelerated Schools University of Connecticut, Neag School of Education, National Center for Accelerated Schools, 2131 Hillside Road Unit 3224, Storrs, CT 06269-3224, 860-486-6330, fax 860-486-6348, info@acceleratedschools.net www.accelerated-schools.net.

BABES (Beginning Addiction Basic Education Studies-BABES Turning Point) Turning Point, P.O. Box 103, Columbus, IN 47202, 800-221-6311, fax 812-379-9844.

Character Counts! Josephson Institute of Ethics, 460 Admiralty Way, Suite 1001, Marina del Rey, CA 90292, 310-306-1868.

COMP (Classroom Organization and Management Program) Alene H. Harris, Program Coordinator & National Trainer, Box 541, Peabody College at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN 37203, 615-322-8050. Information available from: Milwaukee Public Schools Violence Prevention Program, 414-393-6257.

International Baccalaureate Program Bradley W Richardson, Regional Director, International Baccalaureate North America, 475 Riverside Drive, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10115, 212-696-4464, fax 212-889-9242, ibna@ibo.org.

Medical College of Wisconsin The Center for Science Education, Medical College of Wisconsin, 8701 Watertown Plank Road, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53226-0509, 414- 456-8191, fax: (414) 456-6660, censcied@mcw.edu.

Milwaukee Repertory Theater Jacque Troy, Education Director, 414-290-5393, jtroy@milwaukeerep.com, www.milwaukeerep.com/education.

Pioneering Partners Foundation Provides grant funds to teams of educators, community officials, and business and government leaders to improve learning and strengthen schools, focusing on technology use, www.pioneeringpartners.org.

Second Step Violence Prevention Program Committee for Children, 2203 Airport Way South, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98134, 800-634-4449, fax 206-343-1445.

YMCA Black Achievers Shelly Nelson, Holton Youth Center, 510 E. Burleigh St., Milwaukee, WI 53212-2119, 414-264-9622.

Appendix A

Exploring Discipline Practices in Local Schools

Research conducted by Milwaukee Catalyst and Designs for Change for the 1998 publication, *Act on the Facts*, revealed trends in Milwaukee public schools' use of student suspension. In addition to the high suspension totals, suspensions were concentrated in the middle and high school grades. Subsequent research for *Building on the Facts* (1999), confirmed these trends. National studies used in this initial analysis of student suspensions in Milwaukee public schools revealed suspension to be an ineffective, even counterproductive, discipline strategy and a detriment to achievement. Schools with favorable school climates and effective discipline were achieving these goals without the use of suspension.

To find out more, a literature review of successful programs and practices was conducted. While specific activities may vary from one school to another, common themes emerged. In summarizing these common themes, a collection of "best practices" proven effective in maintaining school safety and order while keeping students in school was synthesized. These "best practices" deal with the "Five Essential Supports for Student Learning" in high-achieving urban schools: Effective School Leadership; a School Environment that Supports Learning; Effective Adult Learning and Collaboration; Family and Community Partnerships; and a Quality Instructional Program.

While these "best practices" provide the characteristics and objectives of effective discipline programs, they do not serve as a canned program that can be imposed upon a school. The school district and schools within the district must use these "best practices" to shape policies and practices that will best serve the needs of their students. To examine some of the specific school activities that support these aims, we looked to local schools with low rates of student suspension. We looked only at regular Milwaukee public schools, not partnership or alternative, because we wanted a "representative" school that had a good cross-section of students.

Because we were comparing schools of various sizes, we could not simply look at the number of suspensions given at each school. To make a fair comparison, we calculated a rate of suspension for each school by dividing the number of students suspended by the number of students enrolled in the school.

At second glance, however, we noticed that some schools with a low overall rate of suspension had high rates of suspension in individual grades. To make a positive example of any of these schools, they had to have low rates of suspension throughout. Because the goals of this campaign are to reduce student suspensions and increase student achievement, we also had to be sure that the schools were making strides in areas such as academic achievement and attendance.

Maryland Avenue Elementary and Madison University High School were selected on the basis of several criteria. Only K-8 elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools were considered because most suspensions occur in middle school and high school. From these, we selected the schools with the smallest percentage of students suspended, leaving out any school that had a particularly high rate of suspension in any one grade. From this smaller group, we chose the schools that had the most representative student population in terms of race and socioeconomic status. Compared to other Milwaukee public schools, Maryland Avenue shows high student achievement and Madison shows improved student achievement in key areas.

Conducting Interviews

Finding answers to the following questions, developed based on the "Best Practices for Equitable and Effective School Discipline," helped us to identify some of the policies and practices that establish good discipline programs while keeping student suspensions low.

In addition to school administration, at least three teachers, three students, and three parents from each school were interviewed to present a comprehensive view of the school and how the members

of the school community work together. Gathering multiple perspectives on a single point helps to establish accuracy.

We hope that the questions below will be useful to parents, students, school staff, community members, and community-based organizations in evaluating current practices in your schools concerning discipline and student achievement. If you would like more information about methods that can be used to conduct interviews and observations in your local school, please contact Milwaukee Catalyst.

Beginning the Interview

- Tell me about your school. Why did you come to this school? How long have you been here?
- What do you hope to achieve? What role does effective discipline practices play in achieving these goals?
- What major safety or discipline problems has your school successfully addressed or made significant progress in addressing?
- What proactive strategies are being used to avoid chronic school discipline problems?
- What steps is your school taking to promote students' personal responsibility in maintaining safety and discipline?
- What steps is your school taking to reward positive student behavior?
- What steps is your school taking to foster mutual respect among students and between students and teachers?

School Leadership

- Has your school developed a comprehensive, proactive plan for creating a safe and orderly school? Tell me about it. Do you have something in writing?
- How was the plan developed? Who was involved in the development? (i.e., school staff, parents, students, school site council) Does the plan include a written code of conduct?
- How is the code of conduct enforced across classrooms and throughout the building?
- Does your school make school discipline an important factor in evaluating teacher performance? Explain.
- How does the school identify potential problems in teacher-student and student-student relationships? What is the administration's expectation for resolving these matters?

Discipline Infractions

- What action is taken when a student is tardy? Truant?
- What happens when he/she is tardy/truant twice? Three times? Chronically?
- Where is this information recorded? Who receives this information?
- In your opinion, how would you characterize the use of suspension in your school? (e.g., widely used, used infrequently, varies by teacher) Explain.
- Describe the steps in the suspension process. What information is completed on each incident? What is done with this information? Who gets a copy of this information?
- Does your school keep most students who exhibit discipline problems in the mainstream educational program? Are there any separate, time out, or transitional classrooms for any students at school? How are they used? How long do students remain?
  Who decides when they return to the regular classroom? Are they provided help to keep up with their schoolwork?
- Does your school have a systematic process to review discipline incidents? Who is involved? How does it work?
- Does your school track or report in-school suspensions to central administration?
- How often is the review and appeal process used?
- Do students who receive out-of-school suspensions receive help from their teachers in making up their schoolwork during their suspension and when they return?
- Describe the process by which a student gets expelled.
- Is there an appeal or review process?

School Environment

- What observable practices do members of your school community use to demonstrate that each student is a valued member of the school community?
- Has your school community collectively developed proactive intervention strategies to minimize disruptive student behavior? If so, what are they?
- Does your school consciously teach self-discipline? If so, how is the process observable? Does your school use any specific discipline programs?

- Does your school staff see their role as maintaining school-wide discipline? For example, what is the school's procedure for responding to school yard/hallway conflicts and misbehavior?
- What is the school staff/administration's role in to-and-from school behavior issues?
- What types of extracurricular activities does your school offer? What does your school do to encourage all students to participate? What percentage of students participates?
- What does your school do to establish a sense of community with your students? Is any part of your school or the curriculum program broken down into smaller units?

Adult Learning and Collaboration

- Does your school hold workshops that focus on best practices in creating and maintaining good discipline in the school and classroom? Who is invited (i.e. school administrators, school site council members, volunteers, parents, and students)?
- Does your school hold meetings at your school to analyze, examine, and discuss the root causes of discipline problems, including teacher-student and student-student relationships, using specific discipline data or disciplinary incidents?
- Does your school provide opportunities for planning that address school discipline issues and support for teachers in the classroom after the workshops or meetings?

Family and Community Partnerships

- Are families, students, and community members included in the identification of problems and generation of solutions to school discipline problems? If so, how?
- How would you describe the nature and level of interaction with families when their children are suspended? For example, do you have a process to notify and enlist them as partners in helping to solve the problem that contributed to their child being suspended?
- Do members of your school community ever contact parents to recognize their children's positive behavior? On what occasions?
- How is your school's discipline code of conduct and discipline procedures communicated to families and students? (In their native language)?
- Do all families receive instruction on understanding the code of conduct (in their native language)?
- Are families notified when their children are suspended (or expelled)? How are they notified? Are parents notified about in-school suspensions? Is there any communication in addition to a notice of suspension (or expulsion)?
- Is communication with parents left up to the teacher or is there a school wide procedure?
- Is follow-up contact with parents after a suspension initiated by the school or does the school wait to hear from parents?
- Are parents notified of a potential problem before a student is suspended or expelled?
- Do parents have the right to appeal disciplinary action? Explain how the process works at your school?
- Does your school partner with any community agencies to assist students with discipline problems and their families (e.g., counseling agencies)? Explain.

Instructional Program

- What practices does your school use to assist students with their social/emotional development? Do teachers view this development as a part of their responsibilities?
- How would you describe the nature of classroom learning activities in your school? What are you striving for?
- Are members of your school community in agreement about their expectations for classroom and school behavior? How would you describe the common elements? Are these expectations supported and implemented throughout the school?
- Overall, how would you describe the way teachers and students interact and treat one another?

Appendix B

A Parent's School Discipline Checklist

We hope you will visit your child's school often. You can learn a lot by watching how students behave in the halls, or on the playground. See how they get along with teachers. See how teachers and staff treat each other. See if you are welcome in the school.

See how your school maintains discipline. Holding high expectations for students, teaching them well, and meeting their social needs minimizes discipline problems and helps children succeed.

The checklist below will help you understand your school's approach to student discipline. By answering these questions, you can measure progress toward a *Safe & Orderly School That Educates All Students.*

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Is Your School's Discipline Plan...			
Provided to all parents and students at the beginning of each school year?	___	___	___
Easy to read and understand?	___	___	___
Designed to prevent behavior problems before they happen?	___	___	___
Enforced fairly for all students?	___	___	___
Developed with input from the entire community?	___	___	___
Does Your School...			
• Clearly communicate rules and punishments to families and students at the beginning of each school year?	___	___	___
• Provide extracurricular activities that build positive relationships between teachers and students?	___	___	___
• Work to reduce truancy and tardiness?	___	___	___
• Use student suspension only as the last resort?	___	___	___
• Offer an "in-school" suspension program that helps students with their behavior while helping them keep up with their schoolwork?	___	___	___
• Keep students in the regular classroom instead of assigning them to alternative programs?	___	___	___
• Hold high expectations for all students?	___	___	___
Do Teachers and All Staff...			
• Contribute to maintaining discipline in every part of the school?	___	___	___
• Show every student that he or she is a valued member of the school?	___	___	___
• Communicate clear expectations for student behavior at the beginning of each school year?	___	___	___
• Have the training, resources, and planning time to help them prevent and minimize school discipline problems?	___	___	___
• Help students with their social and emotional growth?	___	___	___
Are Parents and Families...			
• Contacted by the school about their child's positive behavior?	___	___	___
• Asked to work with the school to improve their child's discipline situation?	___	___	___
• Told about community programs and resources that might help their child?	___	___	___

The answer to each of these questions should be YES.
Each NO answer shows an area where there is work to be done.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix C

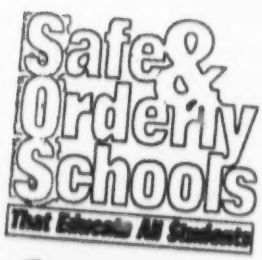
Suspensions in Milwaukee Public Schools 1999-2000

The following suspension data are based on information reported by individual schools to the district, summarized in the district's *Monthly Suspension Summary, Year-End Report* for the 1999-2000 school year. Schools are arranged alphabetically. Regular schools not included either did not issue suspensions or did not report information to the district. Enrollment data obtained from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Student Suspensions in Milwaukee Public Schools, 1999-2000

School	Students Enrolled	Number of Suspensions	Number of Students Suspended	% Students Suspended
Alcott School	329	23	13	4%
Allen-Field School	929	38	24	3%
Andrew Douglas Academy	563	914	352	63%
Audubon Middle School	924	1191	434	47%
Auer Avenue School	547	2	2	0%
Barton School	536	11	8	1%
Bay View High School	1734	1484	630	36%
Bell Middle School	913	2338	552	60%
Browning School	449	9	5	1%
Bryant School	556	11	10	2%
Burbank School	483	55	33	7%
Burdick School	521	57	34	7%
Burroughs Middle School	938	3714	722	77%
Carleton School	468	102	58	12%
Clemens School	424	107	57	13%
Congress School	650	1	1	0%
Craig Montessori School	340	7	7	2%
Custer High School	1187	1977	685	58%
Doerfler School	564	24	20	4%
Douglass School	266	69	43	16%
Dover Street School	494	11	11	2%
Edison Middle School	774	1238	431	56%
Eight-first Street School	440	20	5	1%
Elm Creative Arts School	575	10	7	1%
Emerson School	276	38	28	10%
Fairview School	594	9	8	1%
Fernwood School	401	39	22	5%
Fifty-third Street School	359	11	8	2%
Forest Home Avenue School	913	72	42	5%
Fratney Street School	378	15	12	3%
Fritsche Middle School	1041	769	367	35%
Gaenslen School	743	230	127	17%
Garden Homes School	441	7	6	1%
Garfield Avenue School	468	33	23	5%
Global Learning Center	131	20	18	14%
Grand Avenue School	912	773	289	32%
Grandview Alternative High School	251	72	43	17%
Grant School	577	11	8	1%
Grantosa Drive School	598	43	33	6%
Hamilton High School	1966	543	296	15%
Hampton School	512	82	47	9%
Happy Hill School	479	3	3	1%
Hartford University School	604	228	126	21%
Hawthorne School	402	84	50	12%
Hayes Bilingual School	364	1	1	0%
Hi-mount School	482	124	80	17%
Holmes School	653	103	73	11%
Honey Creek Elementary	333	4	3	1%

School	Students Enrolled	Number of Suspensions	Number of Students Suspended	% Students Suspended
Humboldt Park School	553	2	2	0%
Juneau High School	882	1475	473	54%
Kagel School	355	93	55	15%
King High School	1351	373	202	15%
Kluge School	581	6	6	1%
Kosciuszko Middle School	717	1527	389	54%
Lancaster School	546	51	37	7%
Lee School	568	1	1	0%
Lincoln Avenue School	627	2	2	0%
Lincoln Middle School	757	646	254	34%
Lloyd Street Global Education Center	608	31	26	4%
Longfellow School	595	195	84	14%
Lowell School	253	3	3	1%
Loyola Academy High School	92	3	1	1%
Macdowell Montessori School	602	80	56	9%
Madison University High School	1454	246	159	11%
Malcolm X Academy	561	644	280	50%
Manitoba School	453	24	15	3%
Maple Tree School	490	46	36	7%
Marshall High School	1343	1903	625	47%
Maryland Avenue School	297	48	32	11%
Metro High School	235	291	131	56%
Milwaukee Education Center	884	551	291	33%
Milwaukee Entrepreneurship	153	8	8	5%
Milwaukee High School of the Arts	870	346	166	19%
Milwaukee School of Languages	939	817	253	27%
Milwaukee Trade & Tech High	1576	1544	695	44%
Milwaukee Village School	174	76	36	21%
Morgandale School	588	1	1	0%
Morse Middle School	1137	333	165	15%
Muir Middle School	946	2687	601	64%
Neeskara School	434	6	6	1%
New School for Community Service	114	2	1	1%
Ninety-fifth Street School	292	44	28	10%
North Division High School	870	1500	509	59%
Parkview School	356	40	32	9%
Philipp School	338	245	103	30%
Pulaski High School	1628	702	331	20%
Riverside University High School	1488	229	151	10%
Robinson Middle School	538	518	238	44%
Roosevelt Middle School	672	420	121	18%
Scott Middle School	741	1533	444	60%
Sholes Middle School	939	2777	640	68%
Sixty-fifth Street School	369	11	9	2%
South Division High School	1474	2136	720	49%
Steuben Middle School	920	2207	587	64%
Story School	483	12	11	2%
Thirty-seventh Street School	435	11	9	2%
Thoreau School	698	1	1	0%
Thirty-eighth Street School	533	116	84	16%
Thurston Woods	373	19	14	4%
Tippecanoe School	229	24	14	6%
Townsend School	547	77	45	8%
Trowbridge School	298	29	24	8%
Twenty-first Street School	601	8	7	1%
Vieau School	633	55	37	6%
Vincent High School	1583	870	500	32%
Walker International Middle School	753	1331	426	57%
Washington High School	1628	1175	519	32%
Webster Middle School	929	2495	674	73%
Westside Academy II	402	153	89	22%
Wheatley School	643	93	53	8%
Whittier School	198	1	1	1%
Wisconsin Avenue School	631	1	1	0%



Copies are available from:

Milwaukee *Catalyst*

2714 N. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive • Milwaukee, WI 53212
Ph: 414.**264.4010** / Fax: 414.264.4710
E-mail: mkecatlst@aol.com

BEST COPY AVAILABLE